

Anthropology 113Q—CA Archaeology

(some basic points for those with no background in the discipline and review for those that do have it. One can never be too grounded, right?)

What is archaeology?	The <u>systematic</u> study of <u>past</u> human <u>behavior</u> from <u>material remains</u> .
<i>systematic:</i>	archaeology as a science; advance ideas, test them using the Scientific Method.
<i>behavior:</i>	both cultural & biological.
<i>material remains:</i>	"things" left behind by people, primarily <u>artifacts</u> (portable objects that can be moved or be held) and <u>features</u> (things that are generally large [e.g., house foundation] or that cannot be removed from the ground without destroying them [e.g., a fire pit]).
<i>The past:</i>	beginning ca. 4-5 MYA, with anatomically modern humans on the scene about 100,000 years ago.

**scientific archaeology is new (100-150 years) and mostly during the past 50 years.

**archaeology is a sub-field of anthropology, along with cultural anthropology, physical anthropology, & linguistics.

What is prehistoric archaeology? Strictly speaking, it is the very long period of time for which no written records exist. In practice, however, some societies with written records are still considered "prehistoric," since the associated records document specific things (e.g., royal affairs) rather than many different, mundane things. In other words, societies for which existing written records tell us next to nothing about most aspects of daily life, commerce, and so on.

The Three Basic Goals of Archaeology:

1. Reconstruction of Culture History. (We need to get the chronology, or culture history, under control before more detailed questions can be addressed.)
2. Reconstruction of Lifeways.
3. Understand & Explain Change / Process.

Good archaeology (in my opinion) employs the Scientific Method. Put another way, when you hear an interpretation in archaeology, it's always a good idea to ask "Can that be tested?" or "How would I go about testing that?" or "That's an untestable hypothesis; it's speculation!" All too often archaeologists accept speculation as fact and pass it off as such. TV is rife with kind of garbage. These questions should always be in the back of your mind if you practice any kind of science, including archaeology. Of course, if the thing you are reading clearly states that it is not scientific in nature, then you must give them the benefit of the doubt.

The Archaeological "Record"

As noted above, archaeologists deal with material culture to reconstruct past behavior. In essence, it's cultural anthropology of the past or, if you prefer—and this is a healthy dose of reality here—it's "bad" ethnography insofar as we can't talk to people that are dead and all we

have to go on is the material remains (at least in prehistoric contexts). Thus the material record is very important.

The archaeological record consists of 4 things:

- Artifacts: portable items, human made/modified.
- Features: human made, non-portable.
- Ecofacts: Things largely unmodified from natural environment, but used by people. For example, rocks used to do stone boiling; the bones that remain after butchering and eating an animal; and so on. They tell us things, but modification for subsequent use is not evident. On the other hand, if an animal bone comes from a butchered animal and is discarded temporarily (an ecofact) and then is carved and used as a handle or piece of jewelry, it is now an artifact.
- Structures: Any building. This is a subset of the category "feature," but one of such importance that it is usually considered separately.
- Sites: Any or all of the above items. Could be a small scatter of stone tool debris covering a couple of square feet; could be the entire city of Angkor Wat.

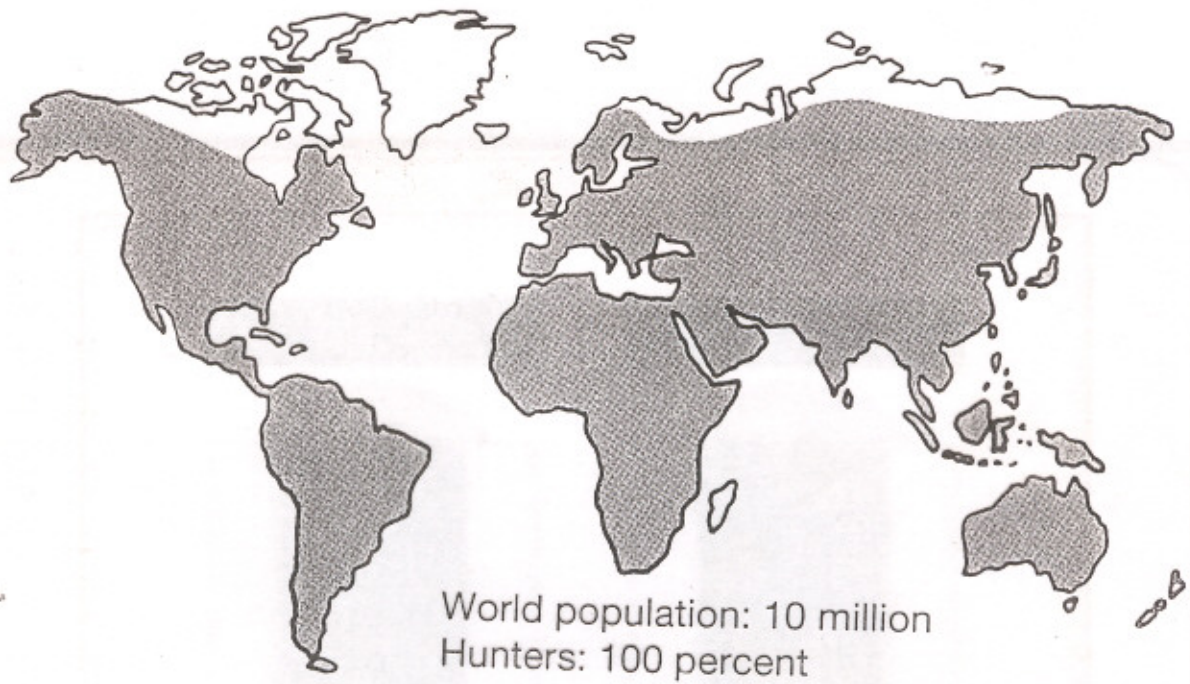
This Course: In a loose sense, we will take an evolutionary perspective to the archaeology of California. That is, we will look at the lower level "stages" of social & political organization (less complex) as identified through the archaeological record. Be aware, however, that "lower level" does not equate with backward or culturally retarded, just as complex does not equate with relative superiority; sequential terms like band, tribe, chiefdom, and state are merely heuristic (convenient investigative terms) tools to help classify, they are not meant to imply "better" or "worse." They are descriptive, but, of course, have meaning in terms of the social and cultural structure which becomes more complex (more inequality) with each stage.

Rest assured that this is not a course on cultural evolutionary theory, but understanding the basic terms (band, tribe, chiefdom, state, empire) is to your advantage. The stage concept is important because societies change through time. To that end, I am including some very basic information here (see following pages) regarding the basic traits that define the various levels of social and political complexity.

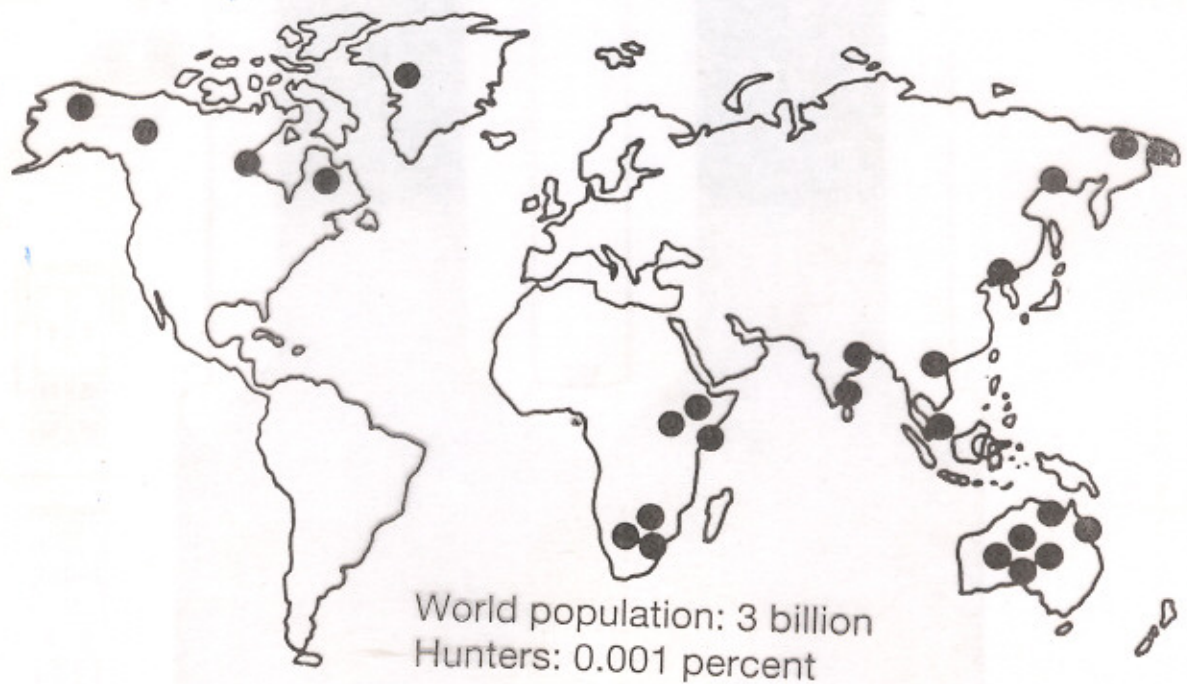
And Finally: Note that there are several good introductory archaeology textbooks that can help you with basic terms and issues that I have not touched on here. Main thing for you to note is this: if I mention things (terms, concepts) in class that you do not understand, ask me to clarify! No problem; I'm more than happy to do that.

Check this out! Not so long ago, we were all hunters and gatherers. Fast forward to 1960, all but a handful had disappeared. The many groups that existed in California met this same fate. It's an interesting, if not sad, look at cultural change in action. There are less dots now, btw.






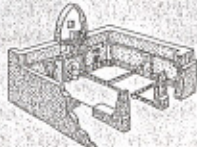



12,000 BC



1960



A basic chart to give you some basic features of social and political organization from least to most complex.

	MOBILE HUNTER-GATHERER GROUPS	TRIBE	CHIEFDOM	STATE
	 San hunters, South Africa	 Man plowing, Valcamonica, Italy	 Horseman, Gundestrup caldron	 Terracotta army, tomb of first emperor of China
TOTAL NUMBERS	Less than 100	Up to few 1000	5000-20,000+	Generally 20,000+
SOCIAL ORGANIZATION	Egalitarian Informal leadership	Segmentary society Pan-tribal associations Raids by small groups	Kinship-based ranking under hereditary leader High-ranking warriors	Class-based hierarchy under king or emperor Armies
ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION	Mobile hunter-gatherers	Settled farmers Pastoralist herders	Central accumulation and redistribution Some craft specialization	Centralized bureaucracy Tribute-based Taxation Laws
SETTLEMENT PATTERN	Temporary camps	Permanent villages	Fortified centers Ritual centers	Urban: cities, towns Frontier defenses Roads
RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION	Shamans	Religious elders Calendrical rituals	Hereditary chief with religious duties	Priestly class Pantheistic or monotheistic religion
ARCHITECTURE	Temporary shelters  Paleolithic skin tents, Siberia	Permanent huts Burial mounds Shrines  Neolithic shrine, Çatalhöyük, Turkey	Large-scale monuments  Stonehenge, England - final form	Palaces, temples, and other public buildings  Pyramids at Giza  Castillo, Chichén Itzá, Mexico
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXAMPLES	All Paleolithic societies, including Paleo-Indians	All early farmers (Neolithic/Archaic)	Many early metalworking and Formative societies	All ancient civilizations, e.g. in Mesoamerica, Peru, Near East, India and China; Greece and Rome
MODERN EXAMPLES	Inuit San, southern Africa Australian Aborigines	Pueblos, Southwest USA New Guinea Highlanders Nuer and Dinka, E. Africa	Northwest Coast Indians, USA 18th-century Polynesian chiefdoms in Tonga, Tahiti, Hawaii	All modern states

Anthro 113Q — Social-political Organization (FEATURES)

Bands

- small scale; a few families (extended); generally less than 100 people
- egalitarian (non-stratified)
- Hunting & gathering the main subsistence system
- Temporary habitations; seasonal mobility
- Organized through kinship
- Leadership ephemeral and informal. Public opinion is important

Tribes

- larger populations (up to +/- 1,000)
- egalitarian, but some ascribed status
- leadership more formal, but NOT inherited. Public opinion still important
- larger and more permanent settlements
- kinship-based social system to regulate aspects of settled life

Chiefdoms

- larger populations (5-20,000)
- large permanent settlements
- agriculturally-based (most)
- social ranking based on hereditary or ascribed status
- Specialized economic activities
- Headed by chiefs, although still organized around kinship
- Wealth largely concentrated in the hands of the chief and immediate family
- redistribution (of goods, through the chiefly power structure)
- Territorial control of the surrounding settlements
- Chief is often the political AND religious leader (a theocracy)

States

- large scale (20,000+ millions...)
- centralized political & economic control
- cities, markets
- record keeping (e.g., writing)
- intensive agriculture (grain based)
- monumental architecture
- system of laws, justice (codified, oftentimes...)
- full-time administrators
- full-time military (standing army) with political power to enforce
- taxation system formalized
- class stratification
- ruler may be semi-divine (often the case in early states), but great wealth in ruling class no matter what

Empire

- also a state, but one that has expanded (militarily, generally) to control the resources, labor, taxation [etc] of neighboring or distant cultures, which too can be states.

Observing social ranking or inequality in the archaeological record: How to do it?

In a nutshell, we look for distinctions/differences between individuals, groups, communities. One of the best indicators is *burials* and their *contents*, *location*, even things like body position. In general, the more elaborate the burial the higher the status. By classifying, to use the burial example, numerous burials from a single culture we can “get at” social divisions with societies, if indeed they are there to observed based on differences in the burials.

Other Indicators

Settlement patterns: this includes things like primary, secondary, and tertiary settlements on the landscape defined (and ranked) according to size variation. This can help to determine the complexity of the economic system. For example, in geography there is a system of thought called “central place theory,” in which site of greater significance (primary center) will be centrally located with secondary sites more-or-less equidistantly located around them. Tertiary sites will be located between those secondary sites and the primary sites, as well as between the secondary sites themselves. In effect, a pattern is created looking somewhat like a snowflake. Now, of course there are variations on this (e.g., sites located along a river), but the principle still may hold that the largest center will have smaller secondary centers, tertiary centers, and so on, organized along the river so as to maximize efficiency.

What does this tell us? Well, the economic system is one thing. For example, on the basis of this type of system you may be able to determine if the pattern is reflective of a market economy. This is usually done in conjunction with the distribution of goods (or the remains of goods) at the sites in question.

And, of course, where such complex spatial arrangements are lacking this may tell us that the society we are dealing with is tribal in nature rather than a complex chiefdom or state, which is usually indicated by such a “three-tier” (or more) settlement system as described above—i.e., primary, secondary, tertiary.

Buildings: palaces, formal courtyards, etc.

Monuments: especially of leaders; peoples activities.

Objects: their elaborateness & distribution.

Basically, we use everything at our disposal, and even then great debate often surrounds the categorization in many cases